

MFA Studio Art Co-op Reflection



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Major: Sociology

Minors: Women's Studies, Photography

Employer: Museum of Fine Arts

Position Title: Studio Art Program Assistant

January 5th to June 6th





Museum of Fine Arts Boston

Today the MFA is one of the most comprehensive art museums in the world; the collection encompasses nearly 500,000 works of art. We welcome more than one million visitors each year to experience art from ancient Egyptian to contemporary, special exhibitions, and *innovative educational programs*.

The Museum has undergone significant expansion and change in recent years; 2010 marked the opening of the Art of the Americas Wing, with four levels of American art from ancient to modern. In 2011, the west wing of the Museum was transformed into the Linde Family Wing for Contemporary Art, with new galleries for contemporary art and social and learning spaces. Improved and new galleries for European, Asian, and African art have opened through 2013, with more to come.

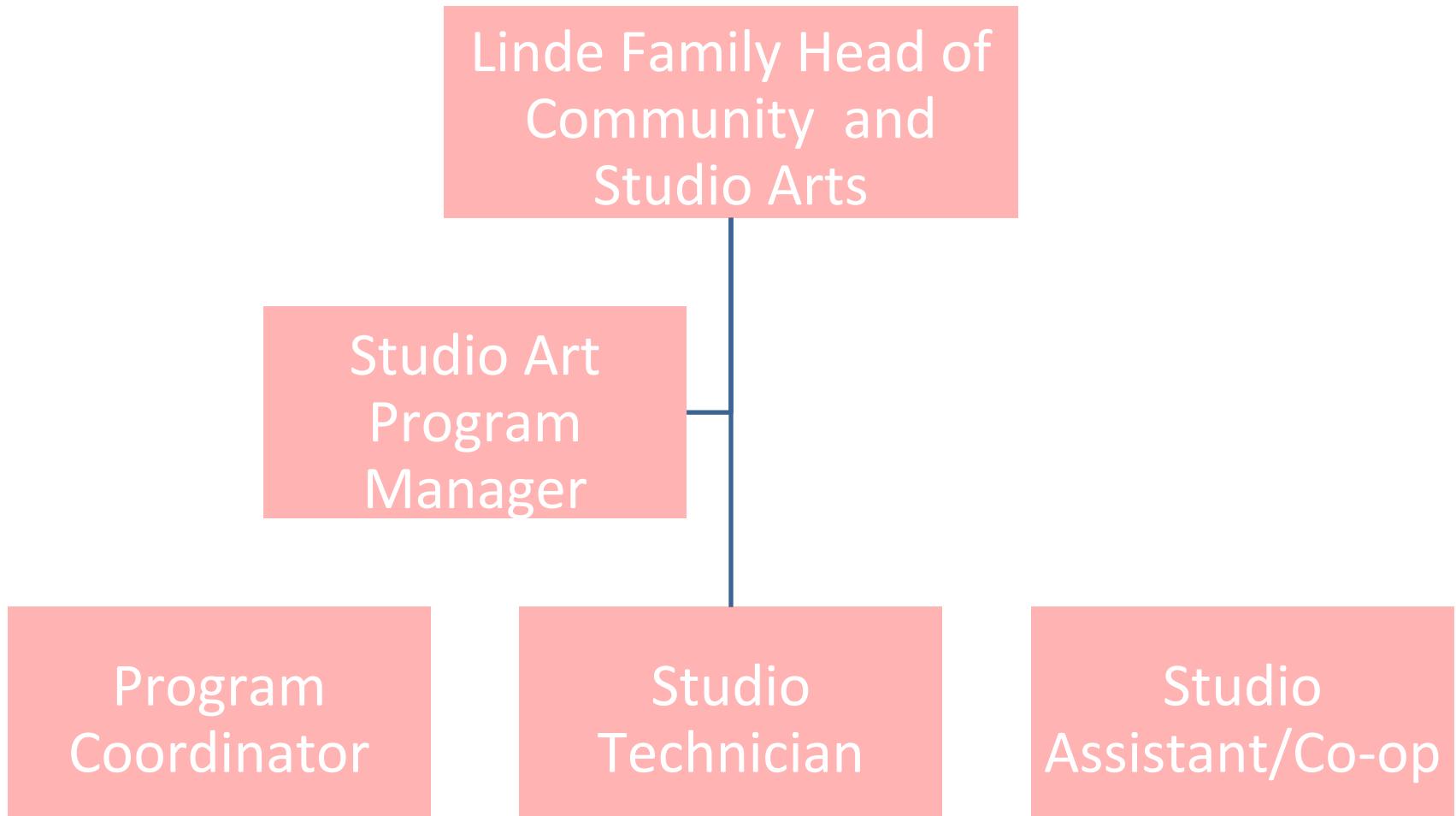


Studio Art Program

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, offers year-round studio art classes and workshops taught by experienced educators and professional artists in a unique setting. Access to a world-class collection of art provides inspiration for studio exploration. Studio art classes and workshops include day, evening, and weekend classes and workshops for all ages. You can also register for classes offered through our partner schools: Diablo Glass School, Eliot School, and Stonybrook Fine Arts.

This program is fairly unique for such a major museum, most similar programs have lost funding or had their studio spaces taken over for other endeavors.

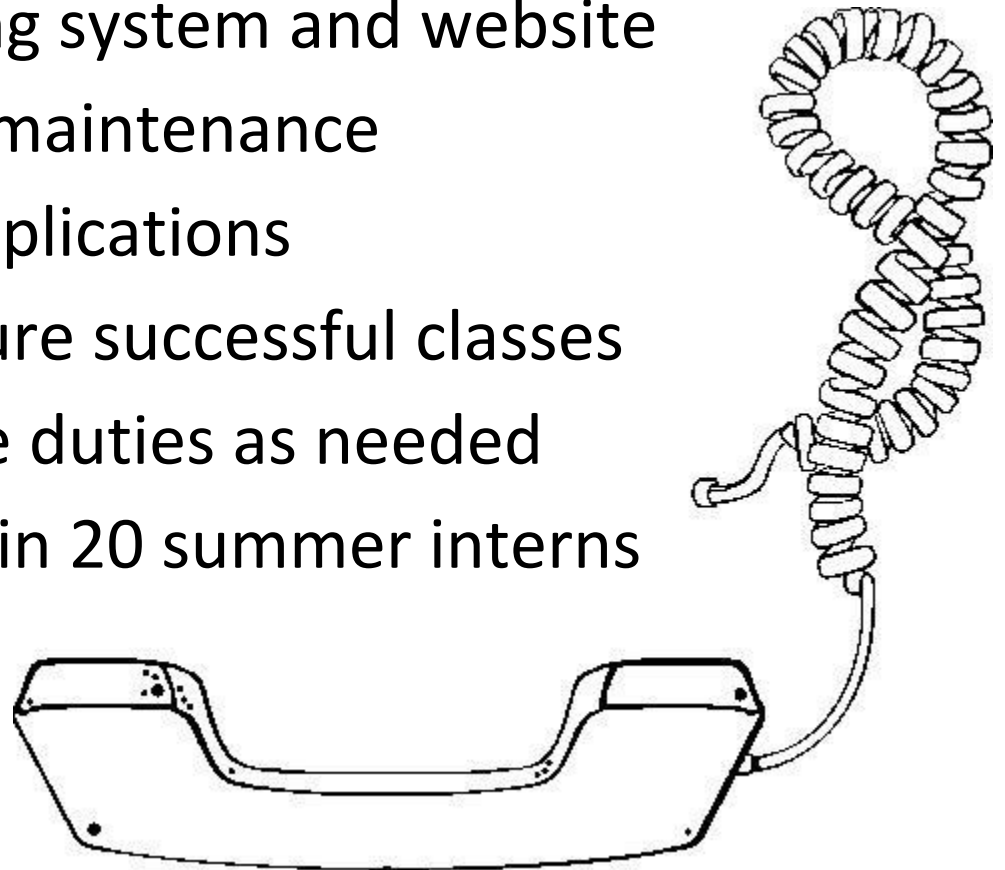
Program Org Chart



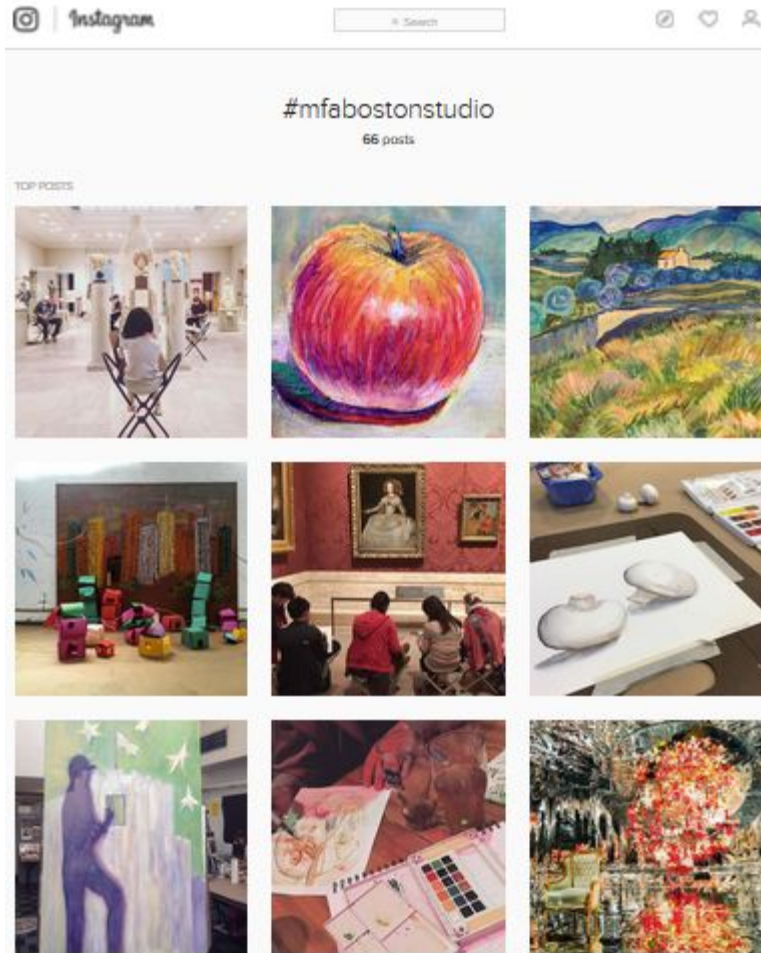
Job Description on COOL

I felt it was a fairly accurate picture of general responsibilities

- Customer service via phone and email
- Build events in ticketing system and website
- Assist with classroom maintenance
- Process scholarship applications
- Assist teachers to ensure successful classes
- General administrative duties as needed
- Interview, hire and train 20 summer interns

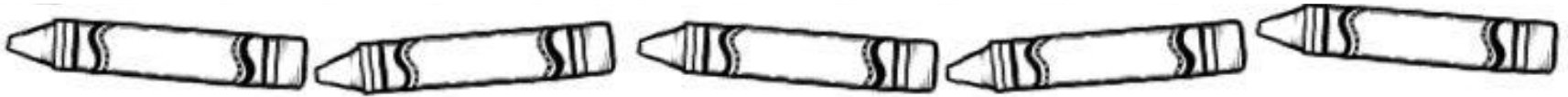


But... we were short staffed so I also got to



- Work with HR to manage studio models hiring
- Improve and update many organizational systems including 10+ years of shared drive files and folders, scholarship app process and training manuals
- Work with house managers to problem solve ticketing issues
- Work independently on projects including updating event photos on website, populating and promoting Instagram hashtag and creating new training material

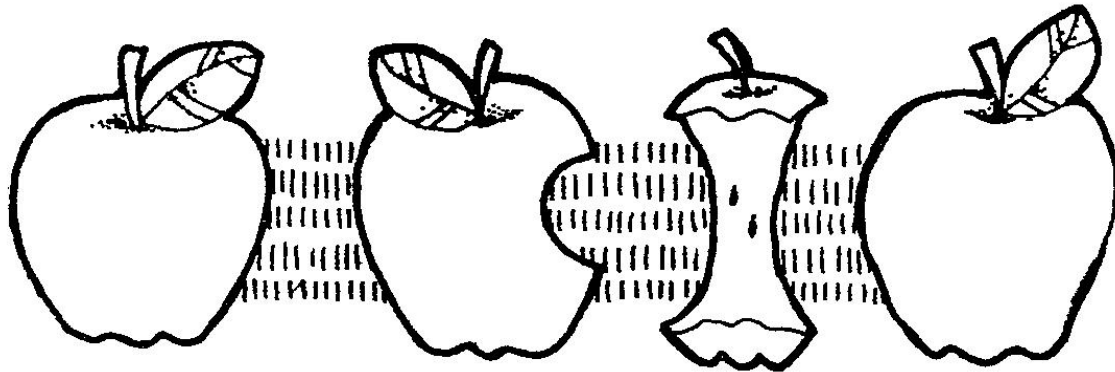
What did I learn?



- How to navigate an office space in a large company, the museum employs hundreds of people
- Customer service skills x100
- Database management & the importance of getting to know the system you are working with
- The importance of being personable, I had to talk to our teachers and get to know them in order to do my job well
- Time management – since I worked fairly independently I learned a ton about how to manage multiple projects with daily tasks

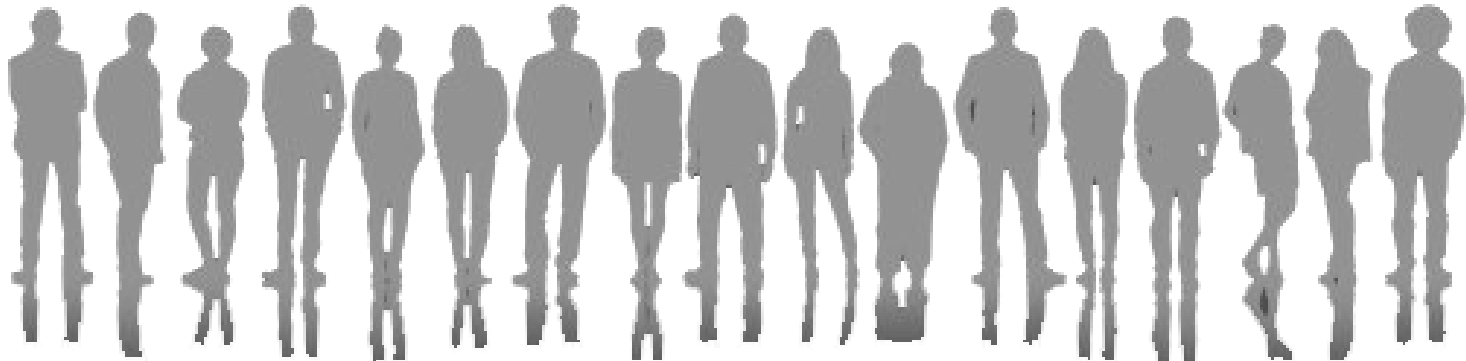
How did I learn it?

- Small team - easy to ask questions
- Curiosity – I poked around in all the places I knew to look for answers before I asked
- Knowing who to ask what questions to – our department coordinator was my encyclopedia
- Observation – seeing what others did and modeling successful things



Intern Hiring

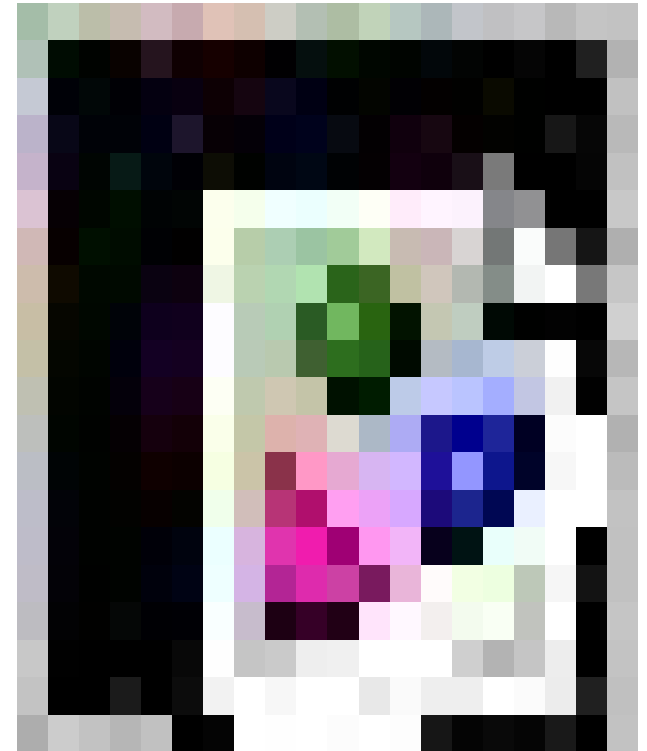
- The most challenging but most rewarding thing I did during my co-op was interviewing and hiring our summer interns
- I almost entirely single handedly interviewed 35 candidates for 20 internship positions for our summer classes



- I worked with the Head of Volunteer and Community Engagement as well as with our Department Coordinator who manages the department's internship program
- My boss sat in on a few interviews and helped me out in a pinch but I conducted most interviews myself, about half online via Skype and half in person

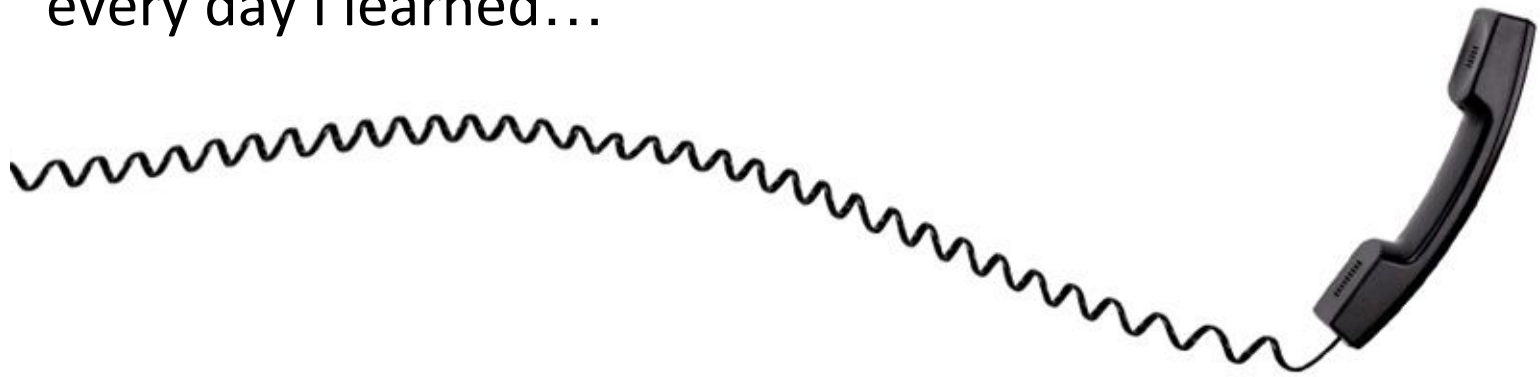
Intern Orientation

- Once interns were hired I designed, scheduled and coordinated a two day training session to orient the interns to their new position
- I had to make sure we booked shared spaces, that all interns knew where to go & that we covered the most important information over the two days without boring them to death
- I compiled a 30 page intern guide with information about the program so they had a resource regardless of the orientation



CUSTOMER SERVICE

When I started co-op I had very little experience with customer service but through the phone calls and emails I answered every day I learned...



- Extreme patience even when a customer is being rude
- How to craft an answer from the information I knew
- Where to find information that I didn't know
- When to ask for help with someone who is being difficult

What I learned about myself

- I find success in small teams
- Could work on asking for help when needed
- I'm good at finding work for myself
- Succeeded with more hands off style of management
- Good at rolling with the punches (flexibility)





INEQUALITY

Working in a large cultural institution like the museum offered interesting insight to how inequality is perpetuated in our society. The fact that it costs \$25 just to get into the museum along with the reality that most of the art on display is made by and about white people are just two examples of how the museum perpetuates inequality. That being said the new director who took over in the fall is taking strides to make the museum more welcoming to people from all walks of life, whether or not his initiatives will be successful in transforming such an old institution remains yet unseen.

What I learned from the Co-op process

- Confidence is key in the interviewing process even if it isn't entirely real
- Understanding the position & doing your research before you get to the interview is necessary
- Getting to know your coworkers is a huge part of your success or failure at a co-op, have people to ask for help!
- Be adaptable in your responsibilities & you might get a cool opportunity
- Don't burn any bridges, you never know when you'll need them



What I'm taking away



- Hopefully a part time job this fall!
- References for my next co-op search
- Increased knowledge of how the MFA operates
- Hopefully squeezing in an art history class or two before I graduate
- More open mindset to the next job search - I wouldn't have guessed my position would be as successful as it was
- Confidence for the next round of interviewing & job searching



Thanks!